



# DIVERSITY@Work

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY,  
A PROGRAM OFFICE WITHIN VA'S OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION

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<<http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/daw.htm>>

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## Q&A: DIVERSITY AT NOAA

*In this issue, we talk with Barbara Marshall-Bailey, Diversity Manager at the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Look for more of our interview with her in the November 2005 episode of Diversity News, airing on the VA Knowledge Network's Communications Channel.*

**Q:** What kinds of courses has NOAA developed in the diversity field?

**Ms. Marshall-Bailey:** When I first came to NOAA, we had a Diversity Council member who was a scientist from India. He was by far one of the most passionate members of our Council. Whenever he spoke, you could hear a pin drop it was so quiet. Everyone would kind of lean in, staring at him intently so as not to miss a word, trying to understand, trying to hear what he was saying. As we all strained to hear, we would often completely miss his meaning.

In my IRS days we would have pulled out a course entitled "English as a Second Language" and sent our nonnative speaker



to it. I thought to myself, "Why would we offer English as a second language to this gentleman who was multilingual and most of us Americans only know one language?" So I began to look at

vendors to see if anyone offered a course on developing an ear for a nonnative speaker of English. We couldn't find any, so we partnered with a local university on the concept and they created the class, "Developing a Multi-Lingual Ear," which has proven to be very successful. In preparation for class, the instructor focuses on the types of accents and languages employees encounter in the workplace. The instructor then develops tapes around that sound, that language, and how the person speaks English to help attune the ear of the listener to better understand the speaker. [See page 3 for more details.]■

## CELEBRATE!

*National American Indian Heritage Month and Veterans Day*

VA proudly joins the Nation in observing National American Indian Heritage Month during November and Veterans Day on November 11.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November "National American Indian Heritage Month." According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are an estimated 4.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (or American Indian and Alaska Native combined with one or more other races) in the U.S. At VA, it is especially important to honor those American Indians and Alaska Natives who have defended our Nation's freedom through their service in the U.S. armed forces. The number of American Indian and Alaska Native veterans stands at 185,000. More than 44,000 served in European and Pacific war theaters between 1941 and 1945, and approximately 42,000 fought in Vietnam.

Overall, VA employment of American Indians was 0.89 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2005. Native Americans in VA's Senior Executive Service pipeline (GS 13-15) was 0.48 percent in FY 2005. Native American veterans among Native American employees grew to 35.42% in FY 2005. For information on VA's National Native American Employment Program, contact Brenda Martin, EEO Specialist, at [brenda.martin@va.gov](mailto:brenda.martin@va.gov).

VA also joins the Nation in saluting those who have served our Nation this Veterans Day on November 11. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 24.5 million military veterans in the U.S. In FY 2005, over 30 percent of VA employees were veterans, and nearly 8 percent of VA employees were disabled veterans. For more information on VA's National Veterans Employment Program, visit [www.va.gov/nvep](http://www.va.gov/nvep).■

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### BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **American Coalition for Filipino Veterans Inc.**  
<http://usfilivets.tripod.com>
- ▶ **American Indian Heritage Foundation**  
[www.indians.org](http://www.indians.org)
- ▶ **Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program**  
[www.tricare.osd.mil/cap](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/cap)
- ▶ **Directory of Veterans Service Organizations**  
[www.va.gov/vso](http://www.va.gov/vso)
- ▶ **National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education**  
[www.nafeo.org](http://www.nafeo.org)
- ▶ **National Association of Hispanic Nurses**  
[www.thehispanicnurses.org](http://www.thehispanicnurses.org)
- ▶ **National Congress of American Indians**  
<http://ncai.org>

Contact information for other diversity-related organizations can be found on the DM&EEO Web site at:  
[www.va.gov/dmeeo/org/index.htm](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/org/index.htm).

## FIELD NOTES

### News You Can Use

#### DM&EEO Web Site Update

DM&EEO redesigned its Web site: [www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo). The purpose of the DM&EEO Web site is to provide an archive of information and a gateway to resources related to VA's strategic objective to "recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides high-quality service to veterans and their families." The Web site is part of VA's process to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to the Department's mission.

Please update your bookmarks!

#### Diversity News Back on the Air!

Look for the November 2005 episode of DM&EEO's monthly news program, *Diversity News*, on the VA Knowledge Network's Communications Channel 2 on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. November's broadcast includes an interview with Barbara Marshall-Bailey, Diversity Manager at the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration—part of the U.S. Department of Commerce—and the diversity calendar.

#### MD-715 Update

VA has been the Federal leader in automating workforce data tables and program plans required by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Management Directive 715 (MD-715). These are available on VA's Intranet at the VISN Support Service Center (VSSC) at <http://vssc.med.va.gov>.

A new training video on how to write an EEO report was recently produced and will be airing on the VA Knowledge Network's Content Distribution Network shortly. The video will also be available in VHS, CD, and DVD format; contact DM&EEO at (202) 501-1970 to request a copy.

For further assistance in conducting workforce analysis compliant with MD-715, or for a demonstration of VSSC, contact Mike Dole, Director, Workforce Analysis and Evaluation, at [mike.dole@va.gov](mailto:mike.dole@va.gov) or (202) 501-1975.

#### Workforce Update

Peter Yoon, Presidential Management Fellow, is on a six-month detail at the U.S. Department of State. ■

## WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Service [www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm)

**Content:** VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Service (VR&E) Web site presents information about the employment and independent living services VR&E provides to service-connected disabled veterans. The VR&E Web site is a place for employers to work with rehabilitation counselors and employment specialists in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring disabled veterans who have strengthened their vocational skills through the VR&E program. Information provided on the site includes program services; special hiring incentives and tax credits; on-the-job and apprentice training programs in private and federal agencies; support services and follow-through on referrals, placement, and adjustment to the job; and contacting VR&E staff before, during, and after a hiring decision. Links to online programs will help veterans make an electronic application for vocational rehabilitation services, or down-load an application form to mail to a local VR&E office. Other links will help veterans see how their military training and occupational skills relate to civilian employment.



The site will help veterans locate national as well as local resources for job finding and special supportive services. Internet links that specialize in employment in specific communities are available through the VR&E service map of local offices. VR&E partners with many organizations and agencies that share goals of providing the best in employment and independent living services. Links to these agencies and organizations are provided.

**Must-See Feature:** The Military to Civilian Transferable Skill Identifier application is a Web-based application designed to provide vocational counselors with current information about the various military occupations and their relationships to various civilian taxonomies.

**Contact Info:** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Benefits & Services, at (800) 827-1000.

**Accessibility:** This site is compliant with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. ■

## DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

### Have You Considered an Intern?

DM&EEO advocates the use of nontraditional student internship programs and offers a guide on the Department's internship programs that will enable VA to address immediate staffing needs as well as workforce planning and diversity goals.

The Department engages in a variety of national and local internship programs. These organizations are committed to educating students on the importance of career choices and academic studies. These organizations are viewed as partners in VA's efforts to develop a high-performing, diverse workforce.

Within the 2006 National Internship Program Guide, which will be available shortly at [www.va.gov/dmeeo/spi/internships.htm](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/spi/internships.htm), brief descriptions of specific intern programs and the organizations that administer them will be found. For reference purposes, the 2005 guide is available at [www.va.gov/dmeeo/docs/05NationalInternship.pdf](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/docs/05NationalInternship.pdf).

For more information on these internships, or assistance in any way, contact DM&EEO at (202) 501-1970 or e-mail Brenda Martin, National Internship Program Coordinator, at [brenda.martin@mail.va.gov](mailto:brenda.martin@mail.va.gov).

## DEVELOPING A MULTI-LINGUAL EAR

### NOAA's Office of Diversity on Diversity Education

Diversity is a term that encompasses multiple elements that define each and every individual as being unique. One dimension of diversity that we might neglect to think about is the way people speak English and the differences between native and nonnative speakers.

In 1998, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Office of Diversity and the Howard University School of Continuing Education partnered to develop a training course entitled "Developing a Multi-Lingual Ear." The course addressed the need for NOAA employees to develop and use listening skills and techniques essential to communicating more effectively with fellow NOAA employees and customers whose native language is not English. The course was designed to:

- Heighten sensitivity to the circumstances of nonnative speakers at work.
- Understand the challenges nonnative speakers face when dealing with native speakers.
- Better understand the accents, grammar, and sentence construction of nonnative speakers.

The course, the first of its kind offered in the Federal and private sectors, focused on the phonetic practices common to various language groups. It was developed to help employees better understand nonnative speakers of English, to understand common grammatical differences between English and other languages, and to learn how to ask questions that help communications. The course was launched in fiscal year 1999 and was open to any NOAA employee who managed or worked with employees who speak with foreign accents as well as employees who were nonnative speakers of English.



NOAA's Office of Diversity contacted course participants prior to the class to identify the types of accents or languages they encountered in the workplace. This information was provided to the instructors who recorded the voices of nonnative speakers of these languages. Audio-tapes of these voices were played to class participants who tried to decipher what they heard. By the end of the session, students learned how to become better listeners, became more sensitive to the needs of nonnative speakers, and learned how to exercise patience when listening to nonnative speakers.

"I learned that even though I speak English as a first language, I must be sensitive to the fact that others use English as a secondary language and I must do what I can to ensure that both of us understand each other," said an employee who attended the course. Another participant said that "The course heightened my awareness of the barriers nonnative speakers face." One attendee stated that "The information provided in this course will help me perform my job better when I deal with nonnative speakers."

For more information on the "Developing a Multi-Lingual Ear" course, visit NOAA's Office of Diversity Web site at [www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7EDiversity](http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/%7EDiversity) or contact Barbara Marshall-Bailey, NOAA Diversity Manager, at [Barbara.Marshall-Bailey@noaa.gov](mailto:Barbara.Marshall-Bailey@noaa.gov).

*Part of the preceding article is excerpted from an article in the September 1998 issue of a NOAA Report, available at [www.rdc.noaa.gov/%7EDiversity/multieararticle.html](http://www.rdc.noaa.gov/%7EDiversity/multieararticle.html). ■*

## ***Diversity@Work***

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Visit our **Web site**, [www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo), for additional staff e-mail addresses.

### **OTHER USEFUL LINKS**

**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

**VA's Office of Human Resources & Administration**  
[www.va.gov/ofcadmin/portal](http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin/portal)

**VA's Office of Resolution Management**  
[www.va.gov/orrm](http://www.va.gov/orrm)

**VA's Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations**  
[www.va.gov/ohrm](http://www.va.gov/ohrm)

## **DM&EEO ONLINE**



The mission of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of online tools available on DM&EEO's new redesigned Web site that can help you promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:

- ▶ National American Indian Heritage Month, Veterans Day, and other special observance resources
- ▶ 2006 events, conferences, conventions, and programs
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations

## **2005/2006 DIVERSITY CALENDAR**

### **NOVEMBER**

**National American Indian Heritage Month**  
November

**American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) 27th Annual National Conference**  
November 3–5; Charlotte, NC  
[www.aises.org/events/2005](http://www.aises.org/events/2005)

**Women in Leadership Summit**  
November 6–9; San Francisco, CA  
[www.linkageinc.com/learning\\_events/conferences/wil/default.aspx](http://www.linkageinc.com/learning_events/conferences/wil/default.aspx)

**CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's Career Expo for People with Disabilities**  
November 10; Washington, DC  
[www.eop.com/exporegistration.html](http://www.eop.com/exporegistration.html)

**National MultiCultural Institute's 2005 Fall Conference**  
November 10–13; Arlington, VA  
[www.nmci.org/conferences](http://www.nmci.org/conferences)

**Veterans Day**  
November 11

**DECEMBER**  
**World Congress and Exposition on Disabilities**  
December 1–3; Philadelphia, PA  
[www.wcdexpo.com](http://www.wcdexpo.com)

**Perspectives of Employment of Persons with Disabilities Conference**  
December 7–9; Bethesda, MD  
<http://register.grad.usda.gov/Conferences/Perspectives/DisabilitiesInfo.cfm>



*Looking Ahead:*

### **JANUARY**

**National Mentoring Month**  
January  
[www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050112-8.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050112-8.html)

**Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday**  
January 15 (observed January 16)

**Religious Freedom Day**  
January 16

**Lunar New Year (Year of the Dog)**  
January 29

### **FEBRUARY**

**Black History Month**  
*"Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social, and Civic Institutions"*

**2006 DeafNation Expo**  
February 11; Phoenix, AZ  
[www.deafnation.com/expo.asp](http://www.deafnation.com/expo.asp)

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*For more events, visit [www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo) and select the Calendar link.*

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